

This five-acre park officially opened and was dedicated on September 15, 2006. Most of the land was donated by Ted Mathison in 1999. On April 16, 2003 two sisters, Eleanor Carver Nelson and Dorothy C. Carver, donated a key two-thirds-acre parcel which allowed the park property to connect between South 146th and 148th Streets. They gifted their property to the Burien Parks Department in memory of their grandfather, Herman Nickolas Peters, who settled in Sunnydale in 1889.

Peters was born in Germany on February 21st, 1868 and came to Minneapolis when he was 14. He arrived in Seattle in 1889, just after the great fire. After buying a small paint store in Seattle, he purchased 10 acres in what was then known as Sunnydale. He later bought another five acres. He lived on the property, which he had homesteaded, until he died on January 10th, 1949. ("This acreage is still in the family and at present is owned by Mrs. Hilda Carver, the only child living today of the Herman Peters family." Our Burien, p. 65)

Peters operated a large chicken ranch and orchard between 5th Avenue South and 8th Avenue South, and South 148th and South 150th. He built several houses on 6th Avenue South, most of which were paved over by State Highway 518.

Herman Peters was progressive. He believed in progress for the community and new things for his family. (Our Burien, p. 65) In 1903 Peters built a grocery store (and later a service station) at the three-cornered parcel bounded by South 152nd, 8th Avenue South and Des Moines Road, which served the area until 1969 (Many Roads, p. 61) He also built a large fish pond there which was fed by an artisan well.

In 1904 Peters established the Sunnydale Telephone Company, financed by himself and a friend, Ebon Greene. Through an agreement with the Seattle telephone company, they connected their wires to the Georgetown branch. Peters installed phones, kept them repaired, collected the monthly charges and handled all the business. His telephone poles were often used for fencing around residents' property. (Many Roads, pp. 6-8)

In 1905 Peters built a large cedar home, which burned down shortly before State Highway 518 was built over the site where it stood. The old Herman Peters home was for many years a Sunnydale landmark. Unfortunately it was destroyed in 1968 by vandals.

By 1915 Peters convinced the Puget Sound Electric Company to bring electricity to the area. He also owned the first gasoline buggy in the Highline area, which he used on his rounds maintaining phone service. Many times, however, his daughter Hilda had to hitch up the horse and buggy and tow the car out of a mudhole. (Many Roads, p. 8) Hilda A. Carver, mother of Dorothy C. Carver and Eleanor C. Nelson, was born on September 5, 1895. She lived in the area all her life.

As of the 1970s, the fifteen acres Herman Peters purchased was still in the family, owned by his daughter, Hilda Peters Carver.

Before the first church was built in the Sunnydale area, services were held in various homes, where the minister would spend the weekend. The first church was built in 1897 by a man named Davis who held revival meetings there. It was a Methodist Church on the east side of Sunnydale School on the Renton-Three Tree Point Road. The property was donated by Mr. Peters, who helped build the church. About 1905 Cyrus Gilbert bought the parsonage. The parsonage (1968) is still standing. (Excerpt from Our Burien; Information from Hilda Carver, later confirmed by Etta Marasch.)

Herman Peters was the area's first Justice of the Peace, as well as a notary in 1897. (Our Burien, p. 50) He also served on the Sunnydale School Board for many years. He died in 1949 at the age of 80. Services were held at the Georgetown Funeral Home. He was buried in Riverton Crest Cemetery near his first wife, Anna Simons Peters.

In the summer of 2006 the Mathison siblings--Don, Phil, Eric, Stephen and Susan (Lovrin?)--cut the ribbon to open Burien's newest neighborhood park and playground. They grew up on the property, raised by their parents Ted and Bernadine Mathison.

Eric Mathison, now a writer for the Highline Times, noted the irony in the Burien Plaza Starbucks adopting the park: his mom and dad didn't drink coffee. His late father had written that "it is highly recommended that the property remain heavily wooded (my wife Bernadine loved trees)." With "great pleasure and trepidation" he turned over to the city of Burien what had been the family home since 1944.

The Mathisons had bought the five acres "in the country" from the Sunnydale Goat Dairy in August, 1942. The Warranty Deed indicates that Theodore W. Mathison and his wife Bernadine P. Mathison purchased "Tract 14 of Cormode's five Acre Garden Tracts in Section 20 township 23 North, Range four East W.M." for \$1,600 (in cash; "I don't think they ever paid for anything on credit." Remarks by Phil Mathison at Park dedication, September 15, 2006)

Ted Mathison would lay 10 or 12 cinder blocks a day, after work, in building their house. Eric and his siblings had many adventures on the property--climbing trees, digging tunnels, building forts and being forced to mow the large lawn and pick fruit from their gardens. "Just because we lived on five acres on the top of a hill, I don't want you to think we were rich snobs," Eric wrote. "My dad was a Boeing middle manager. My mom took care of five kids and volunteered in the community. My parents were into voluntary simplicity before voluntary simplicity was cool.

"I want Burien officials and park patrons to know how important the place is to my family and me. The benefits we received as kids (wooded trails with views of Mt. Rainier, the airport and Puget Sound) we want to pass on to succeeding generations of children and adults." ("Recalling an 'Opie' childhood," Eric Mathison, Highline Times, July 3, 2006)

At the September 15, 2006 dedication ceremony, Phil Mathison said that his family "is thrilled at what is being done here. My parents loved the setting and trees and wanted to

preserve it for the future.

“We moved to this property when I was 6 in 1944. We were moving way out to the country from West Seattle—and it was really in the country! There were only two other homes in the area that I remember, Mr. Upper’s house and Mrs. Helman’s. The hill was always called Upper’s hill. When he died, Mr. Lambert moved in and we called it Lambert’s hill.

“Dad built a temporary house which we lived in for 6 years while he built their dream home block by block. It is a great house—as good today as 55 years ago. . . . Dad and mom came to this property in the country because they love the setting and the trees. Mom could honestly be called a true tree-hugger. They had many visits through the years from people wanting to buy part of the land, some of them developers. Early on, their intention was to preserve the hill of trees for the future.

“Both of my parents came from situations where there wasn’t much money. Somehow both were able to attend Washington State College in Pullman where they met. Dad eventually became a Boeing engineer and Mom a homemaker, and could probably be called an activist. Her passions were education (she was a PTA president) and mental health. She helped start the Highline-West Seattle Mental Health Clinic and the Crisis Clinic.

“Dad could do anything! Plumbing, electrical, building, repair. If he didn’t know how to do something he would study and figure it out. He loved working at Boeing making planes. He was a true engineer. A quiet Norwegian engineer. . . .

“Growing up here, we had a basketball hoop on that tree and a baseball diamond in this field. . . . We walked to Sunnyside School and Highline High through the back woods. Dad survived the Boeing downturn and stayed until he was 65. Dad’s job then became almost full-time as Building & Grounds chairman at LBPC. He tackled many huge projects there. . . . Ted and Bernadine also traveled and took classes by taking advantage of Elderhostel. They always looked forward and tried to learn more. It was always fun to catch them dancing together in the living room to Lawrence Welk.

“Mom passed away at 77, going to meetings right to the end. Dad was very lonely but he kept on keeping on. He started visiting Nina Mae Miller in California—she and her husband being family friends for over 40 years. Eight years later they married in Dad’s home when he was 89. Nina Mae said it was like moving to a park! Nina Mae was very important to this park. She knew what Dad and Mom wanted but Dad tended to put things off. . . . When she started paying the bills and saw the property tax the donation to Burien happened. They became caretakers and had a wonderful four years here. Dad spent one year at Judson Park before passing at 95 in February, 2003. Nina Mae is in assisted living back in California.

“We missed not being able to come here after 59 years of this beautiful place. We are thrilled (and so would Mom and Dad be) with what is being done, and thank the city of

Burien, the Parks Department, Larry Fetter and Starbucks for the tremendous donation. We know there is much more to do, but if a tree has to come down, the groaning you will hear will be MOM! Thank you for being here!!” (Remarks of Phil Mathison at Park dedication, September 15, 2006)

The first phase of the park—a playground, paved pathway, benches, picnic tables and landscaping--was completed in 2006. The second phase—a parking lot, plaza restroom, picnic shelter, trail system and community garden—is planned for 2008. King County Youth Sports Facility provided a \$50,000 grant for the playground, and Starbucks Neighborhood Parks program provided a \$15,000 grant. (“City Dedicates New Neighborhood Park,” City of Burien Press Release, September 20, 2006.)

Mathison Park is the largest of Burien’s neighborhood parks, and the first to be developed east of First Avenue South. The north edge of Mathison Park is about two blocks south of the high point in Burien (463 feet).